

Department of Public Health and Human Services

Public Health & Safety Division ♦ Communicable Disease Control & Prevention Brutoau

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Date 2/9/15

Bill No. HB 158

Steve Bullock, Governor

Richard H. Opper, Director

Jim Murphy, Bureau Chief Communicable Disease Control and Prevention Bureau Public Health and Safety Division Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services 444-4016

Testimony in support of HB 158: "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION LAWS; PROVIDING FOR DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RULEMAKING AUTHORITY RELATED TO IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL PUPILS; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-5-403,7 20-5-405, 20-5-406, 20-5-407, AND 20-5-409, MCA; AND REPEALING SECTION 20-5-404, MCA."

On behalf of the Department, I am here to express our support for HB 158

School vaccination requirements are intended to protect the health of not only the student receiving the immunization, but also the health of students and staff who, due to medical reasons or personal beliefs, are not immunized.

While compliance is high with 97% of students having the vaccines required by the current law, the current list of required vaccines in statute is not consistent with current national recommendations or commonly required vaccines in other states.

To better protect the public health we need to add vaccines for chickenpox and pertussis. Both conditions are still wide-spread, easy to catch and much more common in Montana than our neighboring states. In fact in 2013 we were number one in the nation for perstussis and in the top 7 for chickenpox.

The need for adding these vaccines was also reinforced by 2014 audit recommendation from your own Legislative Auditors who may be here to add more information.

Specifically:

- State requirements do not include two vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that are required in virtually every other state- specifically varicella (chicken-pox) and the pertussis containing booster shot recommended for middle-school children.
- The addition of these vaccines will help use comply with national recommendations and protect the health of students, staff and the general public.
- Montana immunization rates from the 2013 National Immunization Survey (NIS) for Adolescents are below the national average for the pertussis booster and the varicella series:
 - o 84% in Montana versus 86% in the US for the pertussis booster.
 - o 59% in Montana versus 78% in the US for the two-shot varicella series.
- As mentioned, in 2013, we had the highest rate of pertussis cases in the US with 69 cases per 100,000 people about 8 times higher than the national average. We are consistently among states reporting the high rates of pertussis and we consistently reported higher rates of varicella cases than neighboring states.

The original version of HB 158 did not modify a student's right to exercise a medical or religious exemption and we had hoped language granting exemptions would remain unchanged. A well-intentioned amendment added in the House Committee has created a great deal of concern among schools, health care providers and public health professionals. Given Montana's current challenges with pertussis and chicken-pox and the current measles outbreak in the US, we are concerned that the addition of a Personal Exemption may erode any gains we can make by adding these vaccines.

Prior to the addition of a Personal Exemption, this issue had broad support from school, and medical professionals. DPHHS, school nurses and the state's public health professionals are in agreement that the approach originally intended will enable us to better protect students, staff and the general public by keeping our requirements current with national recommendations and common practices.

Thank you for your consideration.



